

What is Claimed Is:

1. A circuit breaker comprising:
a case;
separable contacts including a fixed contact and a movable contact; and
an operating mechanism for opening and closing said separable contacts, said operating mechanism including a closed position, an open position, an operating handle for moving said operating mechanism between the open and closed positions, a movable contact arm carrying said movable contact, a linkage having a first end and a second end, and a snap lever, the second end of said linkage being pivotally mounted to said movable contact arm, said snap lever holding said linkage in the open position of said operating mechanism and releasing said linkage as said operating handle moves from the open position toward the closed position of said operating mechanism, in order to snap close said separable contacts.
2. The circuit breaker of Claim 1 wherein said case has an opening; wherein said linkage further has a pivot; and wherein said operating handle includes a first portion extending through the opening of said case, a second portion within said case, and at least one extension spring extending between said second portion and said pivot.
3. The circuit breaker of Claim 2 wherein said linkage further has a first link and a second link, said first link having a first end and a second end, said first link being pivotally mounted to said pivot at the first end of said first link, said second link having a first end and a second end, said second link being pivotally mounted to the second end of said first link at the first end of said second link and being pivotally mounted to said movable contact arm at the second end of said second link.
4. The circuit breaker of Claim 3 wherein said pivot is a first pivot; wherein said operating handle is pivotally mounted to said case at a second pivot; and wherein said operating mechanism further includes a third link having a first end pivotally mounted to said second pivot and a second end pivotally mounted to said first pivot.

5. The circuit breaker of Claim 1 wherein said case houses a frame; wherein said frame includes a pin; and wherein said snap lever pivots on said pin.

6. The circuit breaker of Claim 5 wherein said snap lever includes a first end and a second end, the first end of said snap lever resting against said frame, in order to provide a spring force to return said snap lever to hold said linkage in the open position of said operating mechanism.

7. The circuit breaker of Claim 6 wherein the second end of said snap lever includes a cup; and wherein said linkage further has a detent which is captured by said cup.

8. The circuit breaker of Claim 1 wherein said operating handle includes a first surface; wherein said snap lever includes a second surface holding said linkage in the open position of said operating mechanism and a third surface; and wherein said operating mechanism further includes a snap closed position between said open position and said closed position, with the first surface of said operating handle engaging the third surface of said snap lever at the snap closed position of said operating mechanism, in order that the second surface of said snap lever pivots and releases said linkage as said operating handle moves from the open position toward the closed position of said operating mechanism.

9. The circuit breaker of Claim 8 wherein said case has an opening; wherein said linkage further has a pivot; and wherein said operating handle includes a handle extending through the opening of said case, at least one arm having said first surface within said case, and at least one extension spring extending between said at least one arm and said pivot, with said first surface of said at least one arm engaging the third surface of said snap lever, in order to release said linkage and allow said at least one extension spring to move said operating mechanism to said closed position.

10. The circuit breaker of Claim 8 wherein said operating mechanism further includes a capture position between said open position and said closed position, with said linkage moving toward the second surface of said snap lever, in order that the second surface of said snap lever captures said linkage as said

operating handle moves from the open position toward the closed position of said operating mechanism.

11. The circuit breaker of Claim 10 wherein said linkage further has a first link and a second link, said first link having a first end and a second end, said first link being pivotally mounted to said pivot at the first end of said first link, said second link having a first end, a second end and a knee portion, said second link being pivotally mounted to the second end of said first link at the first end of said second link and being pivotally mounted to said movable contact arm at the second end of said second link; and wherein the second surface of said snap lever forms a cup, which holds the knee portion of said second link.

12. The circuit breaker of Claim 8 wherein said snap lever is made of a resilient material and is generally V-shaped with a first arm portion, a bend portion and a second arm portion, said portions forming a spring mechanism, with said second arm portion including the second and third surfaces of said snap lever.

13. The circuit breaker of Claim 12 wherein the first arm portion includes a pair of parallel arms connected to said bend portion, thereby providing two spring mechanisms.

14. The circuit breaker of Claim 12 wherein the second arm portion includes a cup, which forms the second surface of said snap lever, and a shoulder, which forms the third surface of said snap lever.

15. The circuit breaker of Claim 12 wherein said snap lever is made of spring steel.

16. The circuit breaker of Claim 12 wherein said case includes a frame supporting a pivot pin; and wherein said bend portion is disposed at about said pivot pin, with said first and second arm portions disposed on opposite sides of said pivot pin.

17. The circuit breaker of Claim 1 wherein said circuit breaker is a telecommunication circuit breaker.